

Working Land Assessment Tool, Crop Year 2002

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Agribusiness Association of Iowa (AAI) Foundation participated in this Integrated Farm and Livestock Management (IFLM) Demonstration Project for the development of the Working Lands Assessment Tool. This tool will be used by landowners and farm operators to evaluate the status of their active farming practices and the effects on their farm management on the land.

Number of Demonstrations Sites and Locations:

A task force of practicing agronomists, Iowa Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) and members of the Agribusiness Association of Iowa (AAI) standing Agronomy Committee volunteered to help develop this assessment tool. The task force, including those individuals listed below, has had much input over the last 18 months:



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Hovey Tinsman III; Twin State, Inc.
Steve Geherls; Dow AgroSciences
Kent Krause; Heartland Pork Ent.
Gary Tuxhorn; United Suppliers
Russ Fullenkamp; Golden Furrow
Dick Groen; NW Iowa Coop

Howard Brown, Ph.D.; Growmark
Rich Finstad; Frontier Labs, Inc
Mark Young; Smith Fertilizer and Grain
Steve Heilskov; Twin State, Inc.
James Russeman; Farm Service Coop

The process of primary development has proceeded much slower than anticipated. The task force has opted for a much simpler format that will be more user friendly. This has made a major rewrite necessary. Changes in the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) rules for animal feeding operations, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) rules, and inclusion of a conservation component have also added time to the development of the assessment tool.

This assessment tool quantifies the conservation practices in use on the farm, the soil type and results of the chemical soil analysis. The tool will explain the interrelationships of the entire system in profitable crop production. Each nutrient will be examined for it's role in crop production and it's environmental impact. Sources of each nutrient are addressed with an eye toward the use of manure. A nutrient budget plan format is included for the farm.

A listing of the necessary information needed from the producer's records to complete an IDNR manure management plan, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs like EQIP, and EPA National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits required for the new CAFO rules is included.

The second part of this project will be to develop an outreach system and education program to the landowners, farm operators and service providers.

The goal of this IFLM project is to assess the present farming practices including the conservation efforts, nutrient management and crop management. When properly implemented, the landowner can evaluate her/his practices and procedures in crop production. The tool will point out areas where profitable changes could reduce the off site consequences of active farming practices.



Photo Courtesy of NRCS

The task force believes that this tool can be used as a guidance document for planning the cropping system on individual fields in Iowa. To insure that the assessment tool is used, the task force will ask for the assistance of Iowa livestock producer groups, the NRCS in Iowa, and IDNR to assist in its promotion and use. Presentations and presentation materials will be developed to promote the tool at meetings and conventions throughout the state. AAI and the Iowa CCA Board of Directors are committed to this type of useful planning instrument.